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Defining Chaos

Jaq D Hawkins, aka Mark Chao (http://jaq.chaosmagic.com)

Introduction

Chaos, according to the "Oxford English Dictionary", means:

1. A gaping void, yawning gulf, chasm, or abyss.
2. The "formless void" of primordial matter, the "great deep" or "abyss" out of which the cosmos or order of the universe was evolved.

There are a couple of additional definitions, but they are irrelevant to this discussion. When chaos is used in magic, there is no place for confusion or disorder.

Chaos is the creative principle behind all magic. When a magical ritual is performed, regardless of "tradition" or other variables in the elements of the performance, a magical energy is created and put into motion to cause something to happen. In his book, Sorcery as Virtual Mechanics, Stephen Mace cites a scientific precedent for this creative principle:

I quote:

'*To keep it simple, let us confine our example to just two electrons, the point like carriers of negative charge. Let us say they are a part of the solar wind - beta particles, as it were - streaming out from the sun at thousands of miles a second. Say that these two came close enough that their negative charges interact, causing them to repel one another. How do they accomplish this change in momentum*?

'*According to quantum electrodynamics, they do it by exchanging a "virtual" photon. One electron spawns it, the other absorbs it, and so do they repel each other. The photon is "virtual" because it cannot be seen by an outside observer, being wholly contained in the interaction. But it is real enough, and the emission and absorption of virtual photons is how the electromagnetic interaction operates.*

'*The question which is relevant to our purpose here is where does the photon come from. It does not come out of one electron and lodge in the other, as if it were a bullet fired from one rock into another. The electrons themselves are unchanged, except for their momenta. Rather, the photon is created out of nothing by the strain of the interaction. According to current theory, when the two electrons come close, their waveforms interact, either cancelling out or reinforcing one another. Waveforms are intimately tied to characteristics like electric charge, and we could thus expect the charges on the two electrons to change. But electron charge does not vary; it is always 1.602 x* $10^{(-19)}$ *coulombs. Instead, the virtual photons appear out of the vacuum and act to readjust the system. The stress spawns them and by their creation is the stress resolved*.'

Austin Spare understood this principle in regard to magical phenomena long before scientists discovered photons or began experiments in the area of chaos science.

Austin Osman Spare - Some History

Austin Spare was born at midnight, Dec. 31st, 1886 in a London suburb called Snow Hill. His father was a London policeman, often on night duty.

Spare showed a natural talent for drawing at an early age, and in 1901 - 1904 left school to serve an apprenticeship in a stained glass works, but continued his education at Art College in Lambeth. In 1904 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art. In that year he also exhibited a picture in the Royal Academy for the first time.

In 1905 he published his first book, *Earth Inferno*. It was primarily meant to be a book of drawings, but included commentaries that showed some of his insights and spiritual leanings. John Singer Sargent hailed him as a genius at age 17. At an unspecified time in his adolescence, Spare was initiated into a witch cult by a sorceress named Mrs. Paterson, whom Spare referred to as his "second mother". In 1908 he held an exhibition at Bruton Gallery. In 1910 he spent a short time as a member of Crowley's Argentium Astrum. The association did not last long. Crowley was said to have considered Spare to be a Black Magician. In 1909 Spare began creation of *The Book of Pleasure*.

In 1912 his reputation was growing rapidly in the art world. In 1913 he published *The Book of Pleasure*. It is considered to be his most important magical work, and includes detailed instructions for his system of sigilisation and the "death postures" that he is well-known for. In 1914 - 1918 he served as an official war artist. He was posted to Egypt which had a great effect on him. In 1921, he published *Focus of Life*, another book of drawings with his

unique and magical commentaries. In 1921 - 1924 Spare was at the height of his artistic success, then, in 1924 he published the *Anathema of Zos*, in which he effectively excommunicated himself from his false and trendy artistic "friends" and benefactors. He returned to South London and obscurity to find the freedom to develop his philosophy, art and magic.

In 1947 Spare met Kenneth Grant and became actively involved with other well-known occultists of the period. In 1948 - 1956 he began work on a definitive Grimoire of the *Zos Kia Cultus*, which is referred to in his various writings. This is unfinished and is being synthesized from Spare's papers by Kenneth Grant, who inherited all of Spare's papers. Much of this information was included in Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare by Kenneth Grant, but there are some unpublished works which Grant plans to publish after completion of his Typhonian series.

[Note: This has since been released as *Zos Speaks* by Kenneth Grant]

References for this section are mostly from Christopher Bray's introduction to *The Collected Works of Austin Osman Spare* (Sorcerer's Apprentice) and from *Excess Spare*, which is a compilation by the Temple ov Psychic Youth of photocopied articles about Spare from various sources.

The Magic of Austin Osman Spare

Spare's art and magic were closely related. It is reputed that there are messages in his drawings about his magical philosophy. One particular picture of Mrs. Paterson has reportedly been seen to move; the eyes opening and closing. Spare is best known for his system of using sigils. Being an artist, he was very visually oriented.

The system basically consists of writing down the desire, preferably in your own magical alphabet, eliminating all repeated letters, then forming a design of the remaining single letters. The sigil must then be charged. There is a variety of specific ways to do this, but the key element is to achieve a state of "vacuity" which can be done through exhaustion, sexual release or several other methods.

This creates a vacuum or "void" much like the condition described in the introduction to this discussion, and it is filled with the energy of the magician. The sigil, being now charged, must be forgotten so that the sub-conscious mind may work on it without the distractions and dissipation of energy that the conscious mind is subject to. Spare recognised that magic comes from the sub-conscious mind of the magician, not some outside "spirits" or "gods".

Christopher Bray has this to say about Spare's methods in his introduction to *The Collected Works of Austin Osman Spare*;

> *'So in his art and writing, Spare is putting us in the mood; or showing by example what attitude we need to adopt to approach the "angle of departure of consciousness" in order to enter the infinite. What pitch of consciousness we need to gain success.*
>
> *'One must beware making dogma, for Spare went to great pains to exclude it as much as possible to achieve success in his magic; however a number of basic assumptions underpin chaos magic.*
>
> *'Chaos is the universal potential of creative force, which is constantly engaged in trying to seep through the cracks of our personal and collective realities. It is the power of Evolution/Devolution.*
>
> *'Shamanism is innate within every one of us and can be tapped if we qualify by adjusting, our perception/attitude and making our being ready to accept the spontaneous. Achieving Gnosis, or hitting the "angle of departure of consciousness and time", is a knack rather than a skill.*'

There are other methods to utilise the same concept that Spare explains for us. Magicians since Spare have written about their own methods and expansions of his method quite frequently in occult magazines, mostly in Great Britain. Spare is certainly not the first person in history to practise this sort of magic, but he is credited with the first associations to magic, of the word chaos.

Chaos Since A.O.S.

Austin Spare died May 15, 1956, but his magic did not die with him. There have been select groups of magicians practising versions of Chaos ever since, especially in Northern England and Germany. In the late l970's, Ray Sherwin was editor and publisher of a magazine called The New Equinox. Pete Carroll was a regular contributor to the magazine, and together, due to dissatisfaction with the magical scene in Britain at the time, they formed the "Illuminates of Thanateros". They advertised in New Equinox and a group formed. Part of the intention of the group was to have an Order where degrees expressed attainment rather than authority, and hierarchy beyond just organisational requirements was non-existent.

At some point, about 1986, Ray Sherwin "excommunicated himself" because he felt that the Order was slipping into the power structure that he had intended to avoid with this group, and Pete Carroll became known as the leader of "The Pact". The IOT continues to survive and was identified as the only international Chaos organisation until early 90's.

There are smaller groups of Chaos practitioners, as well as individuals practising alone. Chaos since Spare has taken on a life of its own. It will always continue to grow, that is its nature. It was only natural that eventually the world of science would begin to discover the physical principles underlying magic, although the scientists who are making these discoveries still do not realise that this is what they are doing. It is interesting that they have had the wisdom to call it chaos science...

Chaos Science

Modern chaos science began in the 1960's when a handful of open-minded scientists with an eye for pattern realised that simple mathematical equations fed into a computer could model patterns every bit as irregular and "chaotic" as a waterfall. They were able to apply this to weather patterns, coastlines, and all sorts of natural phenomena. Particular equations would result in pictures resembling specific types of leaves, the possibilities were

incredible. Centres and institutes were founded to specialise in "non-linear dynamics" and "complex systems". Natural phenomena, like the red spot of Jupiter, could now be explained. The common catch-terms that most people have heard by now - strange attractors, fractals, etc, are related to the study of turbulence in nature. There is not room to go into these subjects in depth here, and I recommend that those who are interested in this subject read *Chaos: Making a New Science* by James Gleick.

What we are concerned with here is how all this relates to magic. Many magicians, especially Chaos Magicians, have begun using the terms, "fractal" and "strange attractor", in their everyday conversations. Most of those who do this have some understanding of the relationship between magic and this area of science. To put it very simply, a successful magical act causes an apparently acausal result. In studying turbulence, chaos scientists have realised that apparently acausal phenomena in nature are not only the norm, but are measurable by simple mathematical equations. Irregularity is the stuff life is made of. For example, in the study of heartbeat rhythms and brainwave patterns, irregular patterns are measured from normally functioning organs, while steady, regular patterns are a direct symptom of a heart attack about to occur, or an epileptic fit. Referring back again to "virtual" photons, a properly executed magical release of energy creates a "wave form" (visible by Kirlian photography) around the magician causing turbulence in the aetheric space. This turbulence will likely cause a result, preferably as the magician has intended. Once the energy is released, control over the phenomena is out of the magician's hands, just as once the equation has been fed into the computer, the design follows the path set for it.

The scientists who are working in this area would scoff at this explanation, they have no idea that they are in the process of discovering the physics behind magic. But then, many common place sciences of today, chemistry for example, were once considered to be magic. Understanding this subject requires, besides some reading, a shift in thinking. We are trained from an early age to think in linear terms, but nature and the chaos within it are non-linear, and therefore require non-linear thinking to be understood. This sounds simple, yet it reminds me of a logic class I had in college. We were doing simple Aristotelian syllogisms. All we had to do was to put everyday language into equation form. It sounds simple, and it is. However, it requires non-linear thought process. During that lesson over the space of a week, the class size dropped from 48 to 9 students. The computer programmers were the first to drop out. Those of us who survived that section went on to earn high grades in the class, but more importantly, found that we had achieved a permanent change in our thinking processes. Our lives were changed by that one simple shift of perspective.

Chaos science is still in the process of discovery, yet magicians have been applying its principles for at least as long as they have been writing about magic. Once the principles of this science began to take hold on the thinking process, the magician begins to notice everything from the fractal patterns in smoke rising from a cigarette to the patterns of success and failure in magical workings, which leads to an understanding of why it had succeeded or failed.

Defining Chaos Magic

Chaos is not in itself, a system or philosophy. It is rather an attitude that one applies to one's magic and philosophy. It is the basis for all magic, as it is the primal creative force. A Chaos Magician learns a variety of techniques, usually as many as s/he can gain access to, but sees beyond the systems and dogmas to the physics behind the magical force and uses whatever methods are appealing to him/herself. Chaos does not come with a specific Grimoire or even a prescribed set of ethics. For this reason, it has been dubbed "left hand path" by some who choose not to understand that which is beyond their own chosen path. There is no set of specific spells that are considered to be "Chaos Magic Spells". A Chaos Magician will use the same spells as those of other paths, or those of his/her own making. Any and all methods and information are valid, the only requirement is that it works. Mastering the role of the sub-conscious mind in magical operations is the crux of it, and the state called "vacuity" by Austin Osman Spare is the road to that end. Anyone who has participated in a successful ritual has experienced the "high" that this state induces.

An understanding of the scientific principles behind magic does not necessarily require a college degree in physics (although it wouldn't hurt much, if the linear attitude drilled into the student could be by-passed). Experience in magical results will bring the necessary understanding.

This essay is directed toward the increasing numbers of people who have been asking, "What is Chaos Magic?". It is very basic and by no means intended to be a complete explanation of any of the elements discussed. Many of the principles of magic must be self-discovered. My only intent here is to try to define and pull together the various elements associated with Chaos Magic into an intelligible whole. For those of you who wish to learn more about this subject, I have prepared a suggested reading list, however, I must emphasise that there are always more sources than any one person knows about, so do not limit yourself to this list. Chaos has no limits...

- *The Book of Pleasure* by Austin Osman Spare
- *Anathema of Zos* by Austin Osman Spare
- *A Book of Satyrs* by Austin Osman Spare
- *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare* by Kenneth Grant
- *The Early Works of A.O.S.*, *Excess Spare* and *Stations in Time* are three collections which are available from TOPY.
- *Chaos: Making a New Science* by James Gleick
- *Turbulent Mirror* by John Briggs & F. David Peat
- *Liber Null & Psychonaut* by Peter J. Carroll
- *Practical Sigil Magick* by Frater U.D.
- *Condensed Chaos* by Phil Hine
- For an expansion of the overview expressed in this essay: *Understanding Chaos Magic* (http://jaq.chaosmagic.com/chaosbooks.htm) by Jaq D Hawkins

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